

## MEN OF THE HOUR.



CHARLES EDWARD COON.

Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.

Charles Edward Coon was born at Friendship, Allegany county, New York, in the year 1842. He was about to begin business when the war broke out, but patriotically abandoned his plans, and enlisted in the Twenty-third New York Volunteers. He served two years with his regiment, and was then for a year Chief Clerk and Deputy Provost Marshal of his Congressional District, with headquarters at Elmira. His services in the United States Treasury Department date back twenty years, from 1864, when he was appointed to a clerkship by General Spinner. This was the beginning of a course of departmental duty in which Mr. Coon has advanced step by step to his present position. At the time of his appointment to it, he was Assistant Chief of the Loan Division, and not the nearest in the line of promotion. Others were passed by, however, on account of his being the man best qualified for the vacant position.

Mr. Coon's extraordinary ability in finance is heartily recognized in banking circles both in the United States and in Europe. He has represented the Treasury Department twice in the city of London, the first time as long ago as 1871, in company with Assistant Secretary Richardson. The first 5 per cent. loan was placed on that occasion. On Mr. Coon's second visit to the British metropolis he had charge of the funding negotiations. The magnitude of the interests involved in the operations entrusted to him in London appears in the fact that these involved the passing through Mr. Coon's hands of United States Securities amounting in value to a thousand million dollars. Not a dollar was lost in the process. Intelligent public opinion regards Mr. Coon as a man eminently fit to be entrusted to the highest position in the department in which he has so long served.

## WALTER Q. GRESHAM.

Newly Appointed Secretary of the Treasury.

Walter Q. Gresham, successor to Mr. Folger as Secretary of the Treasury, was born near Corydon, Indiana, in 1833. He attended Bloomington University, but was never graduated, and subsequently read law at Corydon, in the office of Judge Porter, who is still living. His professional career was highly successful, and in 1860 he was elected to the State Legislature, taking a prominent part in war legislation of the period. He became Lieutenant-Colonel of the Thirty-eighth regiment, and soon after Colonel of the Fifty-third, and in the siege of Vicksburg, served as a Brigadier-General. He proved himself to be a brave officer. In the fighting before Atlanta he was seriously wounded in the left leg five inches below the knee, and was compelled to quit the service. On his way home he was obliged to stop at New Albany, where he remained a year before his recovery. The tibia was fractured, and though the leg was not amputated, he still has to walk with a cane, and frequently suffers intense pain from the fracture,

which gives the leg a decided curve. Subsequently to his partial recovery, as military commander of the Natchez District, Gresham put down the cotton thieves infesting it, and was instrumental in sending many of the speculators back to the North.

At the termination of his military career Mr. Gresham resumed his law practice in New Albany, and in 1866 ran against the late Speaker Kerr for Congress, his popularity enabling him to reduce his opponent's majority. General Grant, when President, wished to make him Secretary of the Interior, but that being impracticable, he named him as Collector of New Orleans. The appointment was declined. Subsequently he was appointed to succeed the late Judge MacDonell as United States District Judge for his district. But Judge Gresham's tastes impelled him to a political career, and, in 1880, he was an unsuccessful candidate for the U. S. Senate. When he received telegraphic notice of his appointment to the office of Postmaster-General he was holding Court at Evansville, the term not concluding until the 7th of April, 1883, four days after its date. Private business also demanded attention preparatory to his assuming the direction of the Postoffice Department. In the interim the duties of the office devolved upon First Assistant Postmaster Frank Hatton.

Mr. Gresham's political sympathies are with the Republican party, but he has not been conspicuous in political affairs. He supported Secretary Brewster's nomination in 1876 and that of General Grant in 1880. Previously to the Republican Convention of this year he was considered a "dark horse" to whom the Presidential nomination might be given. His administration as Postmaster-General was satisfactory, and his appointment as Secretary of the Treasury is generally approved.

In appearance Secretary Gresham is fine looking. He is six feet high, of dark complexion, black eyes and hair, and beard originally black but now streaked with gray. His legal learning is said to be extensive, and he possesses superior ability as a public speaker. During his whole career his character has been blameless.

## Some of the Uses of Paraffin.

Every gushing school girl who sinks her white teeth into chewing gum chews this paraffin wax. Every caramel she eats contains this wax and is wrapped in paper saturated with the same substance. The gloss seen on hundreds of varieties of confectionery is due to the presence of this ingredient of petroleum, used to give the articles a certain consistency, as the laundress uses starch. So that a product taken from the dirtiest, worst-smelling of tars finds its way to the millionaire's mansion, an honored servitor. It aids to make possible the electric radiance that floods his rooms; or, in the form of wax candles, sheds a softer lustre over the scene. It polishes the floor for the feet of his guests, and it melts in their mouths in the costliest candies. For the insulation of electric wire, paraffin wax has today no successful rival, and the growth of the demand for this purpose keeps pace with the marvellous growth of the electric lighting system. A single Chicago concern buys paraffin wax by the car load. Its price is but half that of beeswax, and yet the older wax yields readily to sulphuric or other acid, this being a test for the presence of beeswax in paraffin. The demand for paraffin for candles as yet heads the list.

Then comes the needs of the paper consumers. In 1877 a single firm in New York handled 14,000 reams of waxed paper. Not only for wrapping candy is this paper invaluable, but fine cutlery, hardware, etc., encased in waxed paper is safe from the encroachment of rust or dampness. Fish and butter and a score of other articles are also thus wrapped, and there seems literally no end to the uses found for the paper saturated with this pure hydro-carbon. In the chemist's laboratory it is invaluable as a coating for articles exposed to all manner of powerful dissolvents; brewers find it a capital thing for coating the interior of barrels, and the maker of wax flowers simulates nature in the sheets of paraffin. And yet, until Drake drilled his oil well in 1859, the existence in this country of this boon to civilization was unsuspected, and it lay in the depths of Pennsylvania rocks, where thousands, possibly millions of years ago it was stored by the hand of an all-wise Creator.

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